

FOR WIRE TRANSMISSION 8:30 A.M. ET, Friday, April 11, 2003.

**ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL TRADE AND FOOD SERVICES  
MARCH 2003**

**Intention to Revise Retail Estimates:** Monthly retail sales estimates will be revised based on the results of the 2001 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Revised unadjusted and corresponding adjusted data are scheduled for release on April 30.

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for March, adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$311.5 billion, an increase of 2.1 percent ( $\pm 0.9\%$ ) from the previous month and up 5.3 percent ( $\pm 1.0\%$ ) from March 2002. Total sales for the January 2003 through March 2003 period were up 4.5 percent ( $\pm 0.5\%$ ) from the same period a year ago. The January 2003 to February 2003 percent change was revised from -1.6 percent ( $\pm 0.9\%$ ) to -1.3 percent ( $\pm 0.2\%$ ).

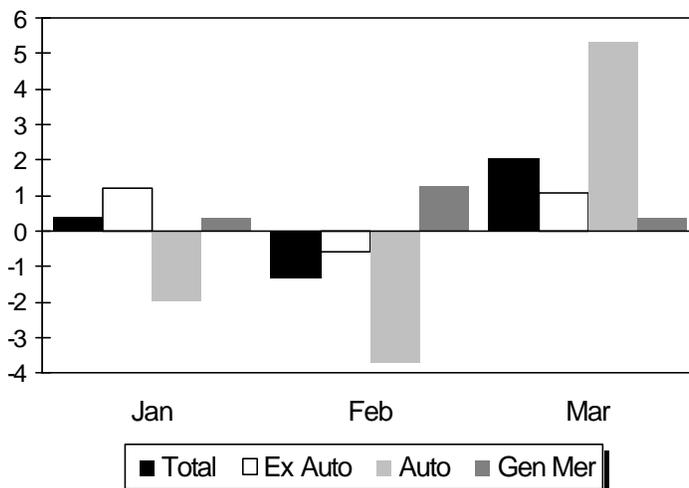
Retail trade sales were up 2.2 percent ( $\pm 0.9\%$ ) from February and were 5.3 percent ( $\pm 1.1\%$ ) above last year. Gasoline stations sales were up 18.9 percent ( $\pm 2.2\%$ ) from March 2002 and sales of nonstore retailers were up 8.0 percent ( $\pm 6.7\%$ ) from last year.

*The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,000 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three million retail and food services firms. Responding firms account for approximately 65% of the MARTS dollar volume estimate. For an explanation of the measures of sampling variability included in this report, please see the Reliability of Estimates section on the last page of this publication.*

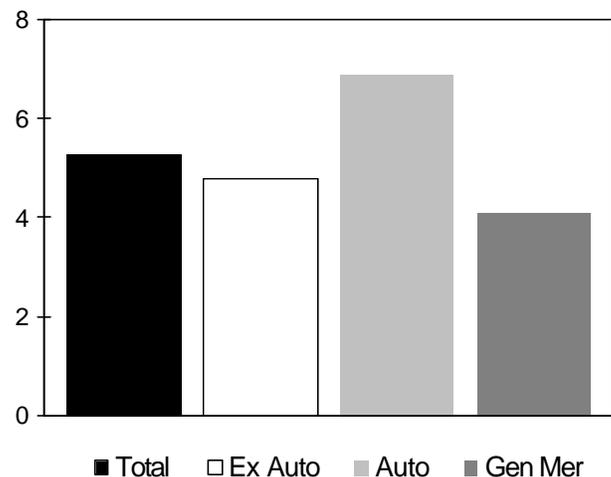
**Percent Change in Retail Sales and Food Services Sales**

(Data adjusted for seasonal, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

**From Previous Month**



**From Previous Year**



The Advance Monthly Retail Sales Report for April is scheduled to be released May 14, 2003 at 8:30 a.m.

Address inquiries concerning this report to Scott Scheleur, Service Sector Statistics Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233. Telephone: 301-763-2713.

This report is available the day of issue through the Department of Commerce's online Economic Bulletin Board. For information call 202-482-1986. The data are also available on the Internet - <http://www.census.gov/retail>.

**Table 1. Estimated Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business**

(In Millions of Dollars and Annual Percent Change)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted						Adjusted <sup>1</sup>					
		3 Month Total		2003			2002		2003			2002	
		2003	% Chg. 2002	Mar. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar.	Feb.	Mar. <sup>2</sup> (a)	Feb. (p)	Jan. (r)	Mar. (r)	Feb. (r)
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>												
	<b>total</b> .....	858,957	4.3	307,188	271,185	280,584	295,808	262,575	311,472	305,185	309,355	295,884	295,916
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	645,586	4.4	227,989	204,518	213,079	221,815	195,975	235,808	233,335	234,723	225,078	224,482
	Retail .....	775,741	4.3	277,384	244,669	253,688	267,161	237,126	282,079	276,014	280,184	267,963	267,919
	GAFO <sup>3</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	67,608	68,362	76,089	66,693	(*)	80,140	80,279	79,142	79,401
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers</b> .....	213,371	4.2	79,199	66,667	67,505	73,993	66,600	75,664	71,850	74,632	70,806	71,434
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	195,701	4.3	72,818	61,070	61,813	67,963	61,147	69,219	65,526	68,377	64,727	65,258
44111	New car dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	50,838	52,307	57,367	51,645	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,597	5,692	6,030	5,453	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores</b> .....	21,984	-0.6	7,711	6,916	7,357	7,816	7,126	7,868	7,753	7,945	7,935	7,971
4421	Furniture stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,943	4,165	4,509	4,158	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,973	3,192	3,307	2,968	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores</b> .....	21,497	-0.7	7,288	6,846	7,363	7,348	6,942	7,694	7,677	7,701	7,714	7,732
44311, 13	Appl., T.V. & camera.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	4,824	5,231	5,055	4,874	(*)	5,507	5,547	5,507	5,520
44312	Computer & software stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,022	2,132	2,293	2,068	(*)	2,170	2,154	2,207	2,212
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers</b> .....	67,461	4.1	25,602	19,942	21,917	23,887	20,152	27,461	25,451	27,019	25,724	25,460
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	17,798	19,668	20,832	18,096	(*)	21,811	23,386	22,233	22,176
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores</b> .....	117,485	1.7	40,081	37,132	40,272	40,692	36,216	40,922	41,003	41,225	40,065	40,031
4451	Grocery stores .....	106,633	1.7	36,321	33,631	36,681	36,766	32,768	36,799	36,876	37,052	36,010	35,969
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,207	2,279	2,489	2,215	(*)	2,631	2,629	2,642	2,640
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores</b> .....	46,505	4.5	15,792	14,969	15,744	15,364	14,300	15,840	15,773	15,760	15,033	15,084
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	12,775	13,520	12,911	12,058	(*)	13,405	13,360	12,658	12,666
447	<b>Gasoline stations</b> .....	60,872	20.7	21,902	19,314	19,656	18,493	15,576	22,056	22,124	21,576	18,549	17,862
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores</b> .....	36,587	0.2	13,671	11,903	11,013	14,132	11,887	14,846	14,678	14,887	14,654	14,740
44811	Men's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	633	684	833	676	(*)	831	837	882	886
44812	Women's clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,290	2,225	3,010	2,328	(*)	2,866	2,893	2,850	2,936
44814	Family clothing stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,658	3,643	4,746	3,615	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	1,477	1,343	1,928	1,530	(*)	1,797	1,784	1,814	1,868
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores</b> .....	19,001	-2.2	6,375	5,677	6,949	6,761	5,813	7,171	7,250	7,424	7,446	7,396
452	<b>General merchandise stores</b> .....	101,848	3.3	36,853	32,894	32,101	36,638	31,444	39,257	39,125	38,644	37,720	37,775
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	45,521	-6.1	16,638	14,640	14,243	18,301	15,408	18,238	18,285	18,234	19,129	19,278
4521	Department stores (incl. L.D.) <sup>4</sup> .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	14,867	14,503	18,663	15,703	(*)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	18,254	17,858	18,337	16,036	(*)	20,840	20,410	18,591	18,497
45291	Warehouse clubs & superstores .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	15,439	15,187	15,339	13,435	(*)	17,485	17,141	15,494	15,389
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	2,815	2,671	2,998	2,601	(*)	3,355	3,269	3,097	3,108
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers</b> .....	25,713	-1.4	8,605	8,460	8,648	8,759	8,727	9,225	9,153	9,370	9,281	9,463
454	<b>Nonstore retailers</b> .....	43,417	10.3	14,305	13,949	15,163	13,278	12,343	14,075	14,177	14,001	13,036	12,971
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses .....	(*)	(*)	(*)	8,530	9,439	8,938	8,203	(*)	9,541	9,534	9,158	9,227
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places</b> ...	83,216	4.7	29,804	26,516	26,896	28,647	25,449	29,393	29,171	29,171	27,921	27,997

(\*) Advance estimates are not available from the subsample panel for these business classifications.

(NA) Not available. (a) Advance estimates. (p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

Note: Totals include data for business classifications not shown separately.

- Data are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-12-ARIMA program and the factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted data shown in this publication. Factors and explanatory material are released on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/mrts.html>.
- Advance estimates are based on early reporting by a small subsample of the full survey panel. All other estimates are based on the full sample.
- GAFO represents stores which specialize in department store types of merchandise (furniture & home furnishings (442), electronics & appliances(443), clothing & accessories(448), sporting goods, hobby, book, music (451), general merchandise(452), office supplies, stationery, and gift stores(4532)).
- Includes data for leased departments operated within department stores. Data for this line not included in broader kind-of-business totals.

**Table 2. Percent Change in Estimated Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business**

(Adjusted for seasonal variations, holiday, and trading-day differences, but not for price changes)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change <sup>1</sup>					
		Mar. 2003 Advance from --		Feb. 2003 Preliminary from --		Jan. 2003 through Mar. 2003 from --	
		Feb. 2003 (p)	Mar. 2002 (r)	Jan. 2003 (r)	Feb. 2002 (r)	Oct. 2002 through Dec. 2002	Jan. 2002 through Mar. 2002
	<b>Retail &amp; food services, total .....</b>	2.1	5.3	-1.3	3.1	1.4	4.5
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ....	1.1	4.8	-0.6	3.9	1.5	4.6
	Retail .....	2.2	5.3	-1.5	3.0	1.4	4.5
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	5.3	6.9	-3.7	0.6	1.3	4.4
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	5.6	6.9	-4.2	0.4	1.1	4.4
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores .....</b>	1.5	-0.8	-2.4	-2.7	-1.8	-0.7
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	0.2	-0.3	-0.3	-0.7	-1.4	-0.2
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp; supplies dealers.....</b>	7.9	6.8	-5.8	0.0	0.8	4.4
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	-0.2	2.1	-0.5	2.4	1.8	2.5
4451	Grocery stores .....	-0.2	2.2	-0.5	2.5	2.0	2.5
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	0.4	5.4	0.1	4.6	1.6	5.1
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	-0.3	18.9	2.5	23.9	7.2	20.7
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories stores .....</b>	1.1	1.3	-1.4	-0.4	0.2	1.1
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp; music stores.....</b>	-1.1	-3.7	-2.3	-2.0	-2.6	-2.0
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.3	4.1	1.2	3.6	1.3	3.6
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	-0.3	-4.7	0.3	-5.2	-1.4	-5.1
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	0.8	-0.6	-2.3	-3.3	-1.2	-1.2
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	-0.7	8.0	1.3	9.3	2.4	8.0
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ....</b>	0.8	5.3	0.0	4.2	1.7	4.9

(p) Preliminary. (r) Revised.

(1) Percent change rounded to nearest tenth.

Official Business

Penalty for Private Use, \$300

### Source of Data and Reliability of Estimates

**Source of Data:** The Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey each month to provide an early indication of sales of retail and food service companies. The Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey is a voluntary survey of a sub-sample of about 5,000 firms selected from the Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Firms responding to this survey account for approximately 65% of the dollar volume estimate.

**Reliability of Estimates:** The reliability of the estimates is a function of sampling and nonsampling errors. The margin of sampling error, as included on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90% confidence

interval. If for example, the trend estimated is +1.2% and the standard error is 0.9%, then the margin of sampling error is  $\pm 1.65 \times 0.9\%$  or  $\pm 1.5\%$ , and the 90% confidence interval is -0.3% to +2.7%. If the interval contains 0, it is uncertain whether there was an increase or decrease. For monthly level, the coefficient of variation (CV) is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value  $\pm 1.65 \times CV \times$  (the estimated value). Estimates of sampling variability are given in Table 3. Nonsampling error, on the other hand, can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, and response errors. Although not directly measured, precautionary steps are taken to minimize nonsampling error. Additional survey information is available at [www.census.gov/svsd/www/advtable.html](http://www.census.gov/svsd/www/advtable.html).

**Table 3. Measures of Variability of and Revision to Advance Estimates for Level and Trend**

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Level of sales: Median CV <sup>(2)</sup> for Current Mo. (%)	Trend (percent change): Median standard error <sup>(2)</sup> for			Revision for month- to-month change <sup>(1)</sup>	
			Current Mo. to Previous Mo.	Current Qtr. to Previous Qtr.	Current Mo. to Current Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
	<b>Retail &amp; food services,</b>						
	total .....	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ..	0.7	0.5	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.1
	<b>Retail .....</b>	0.8	0.6	0.2	0.6	0.2	0.4
441	<b>Motor vehicle &amp; parts dealers .....</b>	1.9	1.6	0.7	1.8	0.7	1.2
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ..	2.1	1.7	0.7	2.0	0.8	1.3
442	<b>Furniture &amp; home furn. stores.....</b>	4.0	1.9	1.0	2.7	0.0	0.7
443	<b>Electronics &amp; appliance stores .....</b>	1.6	0.6	0.5	1.4	0.0	0.4
444	<b>Building material &amp; garden eq. &amp;...</b>						
	supplies dealers.....	1.8	1.1	0.7	1.4	0.0	0.6
445	<b>Food &amp; beverage stores.....</b>	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
4451	Grocery stores .....	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.2
446	<b>Health &amp; personal care stores .....</b>	2.7	0.7	0.5	1.4	-0.1	0.3
447	<b>Gasoline stations .....</b>	1.9	0.7	0.6	1.4	0.6	0.6
448	<b>Clothing &amp; clothing accessories</b>						
	stores .....	1.5	0.7	0.5	1.0	0.4	0.6
451	<b>Sporting goods, hobby, book &amp;</b>						
	music stores.....	2.5	1.9	1.5	2.4	-0.1	0.5
452	<b>General merchandise stores.....</b>	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	-0.1	0.2
4521	Department stores (ex. L.D.).....	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.2	0.3
453	<b>Miscellaneous store retailers .....</b>	2.9	2.7	1.5	3.2	0.3	0.8
454	<b>Nonstore retailers .....</b>	7.2	3.3	1.3	4.1	-0.3	0.8
722	<b>Food services &amp; drinking places ..</b>	2.2	1.0	0.7	2.0	0.0	0.6



(1) These columns measure the difference between the estimates of trend for the same pair of data months, i.e. the difference between the Advance/Preliminary ratio and the Preliminary/Final ratio estimates. Revisions are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.

(2) Medians are based on estimates from the 12 most recent months.